

## Intervention: Programs to educate the public about oral health

Finding: Insufficient evidence to determine effectiveness

### Potential partners to undertake the intervention:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonprofits or local coalitions        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Businesses or labor organizations |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Schools or universities               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Media                             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Health care providers                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local public health departments   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State public health departments       | <input type="checkbox"/> Policymakers                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitals, clinics or managed care organizations | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:                                       |

### Background on the intervention:

Educating the public about the need to maintain oral health and the importance of preventive care is a commonly recommended method of improving utilization of available care. Education and outreach efforts can take place on a one-to-one basis (dentist to patient or hygienist to patient) or on a broader scale (media campaigns such as [Smiles Across America](http://www.oralhealthamerica.org/smiles.html) - [www.oralhealthamerica.org/smiles.html](http://www.oralhealthamerica.org/smiles.html)).

### Findings from the systematic reviews:

There was insufficient evidence to determine effectiveness for this intervention. Practices that lack sufficient research to support effectiveness should not be confused with ineffective programs. Rather, they should be recognized as programs that have the potential to become evidence-based practices—if properly evaluated. Practitioners are encouraged to monitor the impact of these programs in their communities and report on their findings in order to build a base of knowledge sufficient to reach consensus.

### Additional information:

The National Conference of State Legislatures recommended supporting education and outreach efforts aimed at the general public, high-risk groups, advocates, and policy makers as a key opportunity for funders to help improve access to oral health care in its 2002 report, [Access to Oral Health Services for Low-Income People—Policy Barriers and Opportunities for Intervention for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#). This report is available online at: [www.bcsf.org/programs/health/forum/rwjoral.htm](http://www.bcsf.org/programs/health/forum/rwjoral.htm).

### References:

American Dental Association (ADA). State and community models for improving access to dental care for the underserved - a white paper. 2005. Available online at: [www.ada.org/prof/resources/topics/topics\\_access\\_whitepaper.pdf](http://www.ada.org/prof/resources/topics/topics_access_whitepaper.pdf). Accessed June 20, 2005.

American Dental Hygienists Association (ADHA). Access to care position paper, 2001. Available online at: [www.adha.org/profissues/access\\_to\\_care.htm](http://www.adha.org/profissues/access_to_care.htm). Accessed March 10, 2005.